



# Space of Detention: The Making of a Transnational Gang Crisis between Los Angeles and San Salvador

*Elana Zilberg*

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*Space of Detention* is a powerful ethnographic account and spatial analysis of the “transnational gang crisis” between the United States and El Salvador. Elana Zilberg seeks to understand how this phenomenon became an issue of central concern for national and regional security, and how La Mara Salvatrucha, a gang founded by Salvadoran immigrants in Los Angeles, came to symbolize the “gang crime–terrorism continuum.” She follows Salvadoran immigrants raised in Los Angeles, who identify as—or are alleged to be—gang members and who are deported back to El Salvador after their incarceration in the United States. Analyzing zero-tolerance gang-abatement strategies in both countries, Zilberg shows that these measures help to produce the very transnational violence and undocumented migration that they are intended to suppress. She argues that the contemporary fixation with Latino immigrant and Salvadoran street gangs, while in part a product of media hype, must also be understood in relation to the longer history of U.S. involvement in Central America, the processes of neoliberalism and globalization, and the intersection of immigration, criminal, and antiterrorist law. These forces combine to produce what Zilberg terms “neoliberal securityscapes.”

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